

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE HIGHLIGHTS

In 2004, 12,484 marriages took place in Nebraska, which is a slight increase from the 12,240 marriages that occurred in Nebraska in 2003. The Nebraska resident marriage rate in 2004 was 7.1 marriages per 1,000 population, which is one of the state's lowest annual marriage rates on record.

During the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, Nebraska marriage data showed a strong trend toward fewer first marriages and more remarriages. In recent years, this trend has stabilized and has even reversed slightly. In 2004, 7,497 (60.1%) Nebraska marriages were the first marriage for both bride and groom, compared to the 1994 figure of 57.6%. The 2004 figure is still considerably lower than that recorded 30 years ago, in 1974, when 68.5% of the state's total number of marriages were the first for both the bride and groom.

Age at marriage continues to increase in Nebraska, although this trend has slowed down considerably in recent years. In 2004, 6.3% of all Nebraska marriages involved a teen-aged bride or groom, a decrease from the 1994 figure of 9.6% but well below the 1974 figure of 35.1%. Conversely, nearly half (47.3%) of all Nebraska marriages in 2004 involved either a bride or groom who was at least 30 years of age, up from 44.2% in 1994 and 21.6% in 1974. The trend toward increasing age at marriage remains even when limited to first marriages alone. In 2004, the proportion of first marriages in Nebraska that involved a teenaged bride or groom was 9.8%, down from 47.6% in 1974, while the proportion of first marriages involving a bride or groom age 30 or older dramatically increased during the same period, from 3.6% in 1974 to 21.4% in 2004.

There were 5,942 divorces granted in Nebraska in 2004, which is a slight increase from the 2003 count of 5,900. 2004 marks the second year in a row in which the number of divorces granted fell below 6,000, the first time that this has happened in Nebraska since 1975-1976. The 2004 figure translates into a rate of 3.4 divorces per 1,000 population, which is equal to the 2003 rate and the state's lowest annual divorce rate since 1974. Both the number of divorces granted and the divorce rate in Nebraska rose dramatically during the 1960s and 1970s, stabilized during the 1980s, and have declined somewhat since the early 1990s.

More divorces in Nebraska were granted to people in their thirties than in any other decade of life, with people 30-39 accounting for 43.5% of the 2004 statewide divorce total. Almost one-fourth (24.7%) of Nebraska's 2004 divorces terminated marriages lasting three years or less, while nearly half (49.6%) ended marriages lasting seven years or less. Over half (55.5%) of all divorces granted in Nebraska in 2004 ended a first marriage for both husband and wife. More than half (55.3%) of the state's 2004 divorces involved couples with children. In two-thirds (66.5%) of all divorces in which a child was involved, custody of some or all of the children was awarded to the wife.